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**BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN  
ADULT EDUCATION**

**Kjell Rubenson**

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Background Paper 4

**BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN  
ADULT EDUCATION**

Kjell Rubenson

University of British Columbia

March 1983

This is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Task Force on Skill Development Leave. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Task Force or the Department of Employment and Immigration.



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## INTRODUCTION

Adult education is starting to come into the forefront of public policy. To think of it as a matter mainly of private interest, to discuss it chiefly in terms of personal development, is to ignore the social role of adult education. The rising demand for public recognition of adult education reflects changing political, economic and cultural conditions and has its roots in two different schools of thought--the humanistic philosophy connected with lifelong education and human capital theory linked to labour market considerations.

The idea of lifelong education was developed by UNESCO in the 1970's into a master concept of educational policy with the aim of integrating all educational activities and serving as a guiding principle for educational reform in the member countries. The UNESCO model derives its characteristics mainly from basic values--the humanistic concept of man and associated with it, the principles of democracy and collective worldwide responsibility (Alanen, 1982).

One of the cornerstones in the principle of lifelong education is the idea of horizontal integration. It spells out that education takes place in many settings outside the formal school system and that education should be brought to all sectors of social policy. There is a vision of a future learning society in which the conscious tasks of education are divided between all structures and communities in society (Faure, 1972). According to the humanistic concept of man the

right to lifelong education and learning belong to all people equally. The texts of UNESCO are rather vague regarding the concepts of equality and democracy and do not spell out a very direct programme of action. Thus, with the exception of the Scandinavian countries, the idea of lifelong education has usually been criticized for being on the level of general principles and recommendations, giving guidelines but offering no concrete working methods for implementation of the models (see e.g. Kallen, 1979:51).

Anything more radical which may happen in the area of implementing lifelong education is likely to be linked in general to developments in working life and in particular to strategies that deal with skill shortages.

It is quite possible that in the latter part of the twentieth century, the industrialized countries of the world will be facing a major educational and training challenge as labour force growth slows and technological change accelerates (Levin & Schuetze, 1983). Canada in particular is in a precarious situation. The country has to a large extent relied on immigration to solve its human resource needs and therefore refrained from developing a sophisticated and comprehensive educational and training infrastructure.

A sharp decline in immigration, a reduced inflow of newly trained workers, and falling birth rates which will reduce the number and proportion of young people, will make it essential to develop strategies for educating and retraining the existing



workforce.

It is obvious that the philosophies of lifelong education and labour market concerns are based on very different value systems. However, one thing they have in common is how to engage adults in education. The purpose of this paper is to present and interpret the research on barriers to participation in adult education within a broad political and policy context.

#### RESEARCH ON BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

In order to get an understanding of barriers to participation in adult education, one has to look, not only at studies dealing directly with reasons for not attending, but at the participation literature at large. Thus before turning to barriers, a short review will be given of the research on the characteristics of participants and motives for participation. The purpose is to present general trends rather than specific results from individual studies.

#### Who Participates in Organized Adult Education?

This and the next section are mainly based on the following literature reviews (Cross, 1979, 1981; Rubenson, 1977). Unfortunately, there are fewer major participation studies done in Canada than in the United States or Western Europe. Another difficulty is that the official Canadian statistics on adult education participation are underdeveloped. However, existing Canadian inquiries (e.g. Waniewicz, 1976; CAAE-ICEA, 1982)

indicate that the general trends that can be detected in foreign studies hold true also for Canada.

The description of the characteristics of the participants are amazingly consistent across different countries and over the years. The general conclusion arrived at by Johnstone and Rivera in their comprehensive study in 1965 (p. 231) is as true today as it was almost twenty years ago. "One of the most persistent findings emerging from the inquiry is that a great disparity exists in the involvement in continuing education of segments of the population situated at different levels of the social hierarchy."

Table 1 presents the findings from a recent survey conducted by CAAE-ICEA.



TABLE 1

Participation Rates in Organized Adult Education in 1982  
 Percent Participation, N=2,124 (after CAAE/ICEA, 1982:8)

<u>Education</u>	
Public	2
High School	11
Community College	34
University	32
<u>Family Income</u>	
<\$10,000	5
\$10,000-20,000	16
\$20,000-30,000	20
\$30,000 +	27
<u>Age</u>	
18-24	30
25-44	23
45-64	10
65 +	3
<u>Sex</u>	
F	16
M	17

From the literature, as well as from the figures in Table 1, it is clear that educational attainment is by far the best predictor of participation in adult education.

From a policy point of view the relationship between income and participation is crucial. As indicated in Table 1, and clearly revealed in the research literature, there is a connection between income and engagement in adult education. However, when age and educational attainment are controlled, income has little influence on the rate of participation.

Different studies have found educational attainment to have a much stronger relationship to participation than occupation. Although occupation accounts for a little participation, its effect is quite secondary by comparison. However, it is worth mentioning that when education is controlled, white collar workers have a higher participation rate and interest in adult education than blue collar workers. Taken together the effects of educational attainment, occupation and income are enormous and through their combined influence rates of participation rise from virtual nonexistence to levels which include one person in two (Johstone & Rivera, 1965).

Participation and interest in adult education are clearly related to age. Interest as well as participation, starts to decline in the early thirties and drops sharply after the age of fifty. Age does not operate independently but interacts with level of educational attainment. Thus the change in participation rate by age is most dramatic among those with little previous education.

While the elderly remain one of the most underrepresented of all subgroups there has been a substantial growth in their level of participation in recent years.

Women and men participate to about the same extent. In most studies women express more interest in adult education than men. On a worldwide basis, the recent growth of participation by women has been spectacular due to increased opportunities in both education and career. In the U.S., for example, women



increased their participation by 15 percent between 1975 to 1978 whereas men showed a drop of 2 percent (Cross, 1979:59). The changing relationship between the sexes is especially noteworthy given the fact that women are more likely to be paying for their own education than men. This is partly a result of the fact that they have fewer possibilities than men for education and training paid for by employers.

The discussion so far has only dealt with organized adult education and thus does not take into account the whole area of self-education. What makes the research on self-directed learning especially interesting from a policy point of view is that the results partly contradict what has been found with regard to participation in organized adult education.

According to Tough (1978) the results from studies directed to the question of adult's self education show:

Participation in self-directed learning is almost universal. Studies report that from 70 to 100 per cent of all adults conduct at least one learning project each year.

The typical adult spends about one hundred hours on each learning project, conducting five projects each year, for a total of five hundred hours per year. This means that self-directed projects are, on average, of longer duration than the typical college course carrying three credit hours.

Almost three-quarters of the learning projects of adults are entirely self-directed; about 15 per cent involve group learning, 10 per cent are one-to-one learning situations, and 3 per cent utilize completely pre-programmed, non-human resources such as tapes, programmed instruction and television. Only 20 percent of all learning projects are planned by a professional who is paid or institutionally designated to facilitate the learning.

Self-directed learning is, compared to organized instruction, relatively free of class bias since demographic variables have little or no influence on the choice to learn. Poor people with little formal education do plenty of learning, but they do it on their own or with peers instead of in adult education classes. In participation in learning efforts during adulthood, there does not seem to be any large imbalance, any grossly underrepresented group, nor any particular unfairness or injustice.

The results from research on self-directed learning are dangerous in the way they suggest that a large number of adults are involved in learning activities outside organized education. Policy makers could easily be blinded by research statements concerning the great scope of self-directed learning, which represents an inexpensive form of education for society while not encroaching on the territories of the traditional, more prestigious types of education. The fact is that while participation in self-directed learning appears to be almost universal, a corresponding and simultaneous betterment in the position of disadvantaged groups has not been observed.

Socio-demographic factors like age, income, education and so on are useful primarily in specifying which groups are involved and serving as a warning signal. However, they do not directly tell us why adults engage in education.

#### Motives for Participation

Table 2 gives a summary of the findings in motives for participation in adult education.



TABLE 2  
Summary of the Literature  
Concerning Motives to Engage in Adult Education

The strongest motives for participating are "work" and personal satisfaction.

Typically about one third give personal satisfaction as their main reason for participation.

One powerful reason for participating is the desire to make practical use of the knowledge acquired.

Preparation for new jobs is mainly emphasized by persons under 30 and by women in the process of changing from child care to gainful employment.

Interest in job-related goals begins to decline at age 30 and drops off sharply after age 50.

Professionals and college graduates are more likely to be seeking advancement in present jobs than blue collar workers.

Pensioners look for courses where they can acquire knowledge which will help them to adjust to their new role in society.

Women working at home tend more than others to state that they participate to "get out of the rut" and "see new faces".

Personal satisfaction is a stronger motive among the upper classes than among the lower.

There is a steadily growing number of people taking courses for recreational reasons.

The summary of results in Table 2 shows the clear connection between the situation in which persons find themselves and their engagement in adult education.

With this short presentation of the general participation literature as a background, the discussion now turns to

perceived barriers.

### Barriers to Participation

There has been much less research devoted to finding out why large groups don't participate than why they do. The most commonly used approach has been to ask people through interviews or questionnaires. The results from these kinds of studies are often difficult to interpret. If, for example, large groups state that the reason for not taking part is high cost, does this mean that a reduction in cost would substantially increase the participation rate? Fortunately there are some longitudinal studies that together with recent field experiments add to our knowledge of actual behaviour.

It is common to classify recruitment impediments into situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers. Situational barriers stem from the person's most immediate situation and could be lack of time due to home or work responsibilities, geographical isolation and so on. Dispositional barriers are linked to one's self-concept, confidence, level of aspiration and attitudes to adult education. Institutional barriers have to do with the availability of relevant courses, scheduling and so on.

### Situational Barriers

Looking at perceived barriers across different studies, it's obvious that situational barriers dominate, especially lack of time and cost. Waniewicz's (1976) study of demand for part

time learning in Ontario showed that the problem of being busy constituted 22 percent of all past obstacles mentioned by learners, 28 percent of all obstacles experienced currently by learners, and 23 percent of all obstacles experienced by "would-be-learners". Without knowing how a person is spending his time it is difficult to interpret these kind of results. It is as much a question of how one chooses to use the available time as of being too busy to participate. A closer look at the actual life situation reveals that many "would-be-learners" have about the same tasks to perform as those who participate in adult education (Rubenson, et al., 1977). However, families with three and more children, and those with irregular working hours, are worse off than others.

Available research does not indicate that an increase in leisure time will necessarily lead to a boom for adult education. Robinson's (1977) time budget study in the United States showed that leisure increased between 1965 and 1975 by an average of some four hours per week. This was accounted for by a reduction in the amount of time which the subjects reported that they had devoted to jobs and domestic chores. Where adult education is concerned we may note that the extra leisure was almost entirely absorbed by increased television viewing and few persons had drawn upon it for educational purposes. These kinds of results are interesting in view of the fears of economists and politicians that the heavy unemployment now prevailing is not a passing phase but can be partly expected to persist even



in a boom period. Measures such as drastic reductions of working hours, the introduction of sabbatical years and other forms of worksharing are being considered as a means of enlarging the portion of people in employment. The critical question with regard to adult education is to what extent the resultant leisure increase will be applied to education and what part is to be played by the various organizers of adult education.

Cost is a very difficult barrier to study via the survey method. Many who refer to cost as a barrier do not know the actual cost. Furthermore, willingness to pay is not the same as ability to pay. However, it's clear from the literature that cost is a stronger impediment among the lower socio-economic groups than among the higher.

There are no comprehensive data in Canada on who pays for adult education. In the U.S.A. public funding is supporting adult education for about one third of black learners, while employers are supporting educational costs for about a third of white males. Females are the only population group in which the majority of the learners pay for educational costs from their own funds (Cross, 1981:100). Thus it is quite understandable that women are more likely than men to cite cost of education as a barrier.

While the results from surveys of perceived barriers are somewhat problematic to interpret, much can be learned from how a change in financing effects participation in adult education. Follow-up studies of the impact of Proposition 13 on California

community colleges show that the savage reduction in public funding for education led to a drastic reduction in the number of persons engaged in this kind of education (Cross, 1981:101). The decrease was especially pronounced in part-time studies in non-credit courses (down 40 percent). It is unclear how much of the drop was due to canceling of courses (20 percent of the non-credit courses were dropped) and how much came as a result of a shift of 10 percent of the courses to fee-supported status (Cross, 1981).

Bishop and Van Dyke (1977) found that the termination of Vietnam war veteran benefits led to a dramatic decrease in the enrollment in community colleges.

A general problem with regard to cost is that the general university and college student financing systems have been developed with 18-22 year olds in mind and not adults. The person who wishes to embark on a longer education and who has previously been gainfully employed has to accept a marked reduction in living standards. Simulations by the Swedish National Board of Statistics have indicated that a transition to full-time studies would result in a dramatic increase in the number of households falling below the subsistence level (SCB, 1981).

There are naturally other situation barriers than cost or lack of time, such as no child care facilities or lack of transportation. In comparison to the former the latter are of less general importance, however they can have a large impact on



specific groups.

### Dispositional Barriers

Looking at the research on barriers one is left with an impression that most people not participating in adult education are nonetheless highly motivated to avail themselves of the opportunities provided, but that they are prevented by external factors from doing so. There are two reasons why psychological barriers are only mentioned by 5 to 15 percent of the respondents. First, it is not as socially acceptable to give these kind of impediments as situational or institutional barriers. Secondly, the instruments are often constructed in such a way that there is a built-in bias for situational barriers.

The issue of social bias is clearly demonstrated in a study by Wilcox, et al., 1976 (ref. in Cross, 1981:107). The respondents were asked not only to cite barriers to their own learning but also to speculate on why other adults among their acquaintances did not take part in educational activities. Lack of interest was a leading barrier (26 percent) attributed to others, but fewer than 2 percent were willing to admit that lack of interest determined their own participation.

The central role of dispositional barriers was also unveiled in one of the few existing longitudinal studies on barriers (Rubenson, 1975). In this investigation data were collected at several points in time, allowing the investigator to examine impediments in light of both previous intentions and

actual participation. It was noted that those who did participate could be recognized by the infrequency with which they reported psychological obstacles prior to recruitment. Those who were not interested and did not participate were conspicuous by the emphasis they placed upon psychological factors, in particular "had enough of school" and "already got enough out of life".

Looking at different subgroups it is clear that fear of not being able to succeed with the studies is greater among older persons than among younger ones. Further negative attitudes toward adult education are chiefly found among lower socio-economic groups.

#### Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers are mentioned by 10 to 25 percent of "would-be-learners" in most surveys. This kind of barrier is mostly found in connection with university and college programmes originally devised for full-time learners.

Institutional barriers can usually be grouped into the following five categories (Cross, 1979:111): 1) scheduling problems, 2) problems with location and transportation, 3) lack of courses that are interesting, practical or relevant, 4) procedural problems related to attendance, red-tape, time requirements, and so on, and 5) lack of information about procedures and programmes.

During the seventies college programmes have been made more accessible to working adults through scheduling classes so that



working adults can attend, granting credit for non-collegiate learning and creating more flexible admission procedures. However, the changes in procedures in order to accommodate the adults have occurred to a lesser extent in Canada than in the United States.

The most commonly reported institutional barriers are scheduling and problems with location or transportation. To a certain extent these, like barriers such as the absence of courses which are interesting, stem from inadequate information about the options which do exist. Though it would be a mistake to totally write off these obstacles as an information problem. Rubenson, et al. (1977), found that despite a wide selection of courses which were offered, a large group stated that they had no opportunity to study the course they desired. An examination of the actual curriculum in the region showed that these statements were not completely attributable to ignorance of opportunities, they also reflected deficiencies in the range of opportunities.

As Cross (1979:112) points out, "Public policy decisions may encourage further removal of institutional barriers, but the major challenge for policy makers lies in better understanding of dispositional barriers." Such an understanding can't be reached simply by looking at empirical descriptions of who participates, motives for participation and perceived barriers to participation. What is needed is a theoretical framework which can serve as a basis for analyzing the above presented

empirical findings.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING BARRIERS

In a very simplistic way a person's decision whether to participate or not could be described in the following way:

VALENCE

-Sees participation in adult education as a conceivable means of satisfying experienced needs

↓  
HIGH PROBABILITY  
OF PARTICIPATION  
↑

EXPECTANCY

-Believes oneself to be in a position to complete and successfully cope with a course.

Persons who don't see participation in adult education as a means of satisfying needs and/or who don't believe themselves capable of completing their studies will probably not participate. The above structure, based on the general expectancy-valence theory, is a fruitful point of departure to understanding the individual's psychological apparatus--i.e. the individual's decision-making process. However, knowledge about how the individual interprets the world cannot by itself give an understanding of barriers. Only when we also include structural factors and analyze the interaction between them and the individual conceptual apparatus does an interpretation become possible. The model presented in Figure 1 should be seen as an effort in this direction.



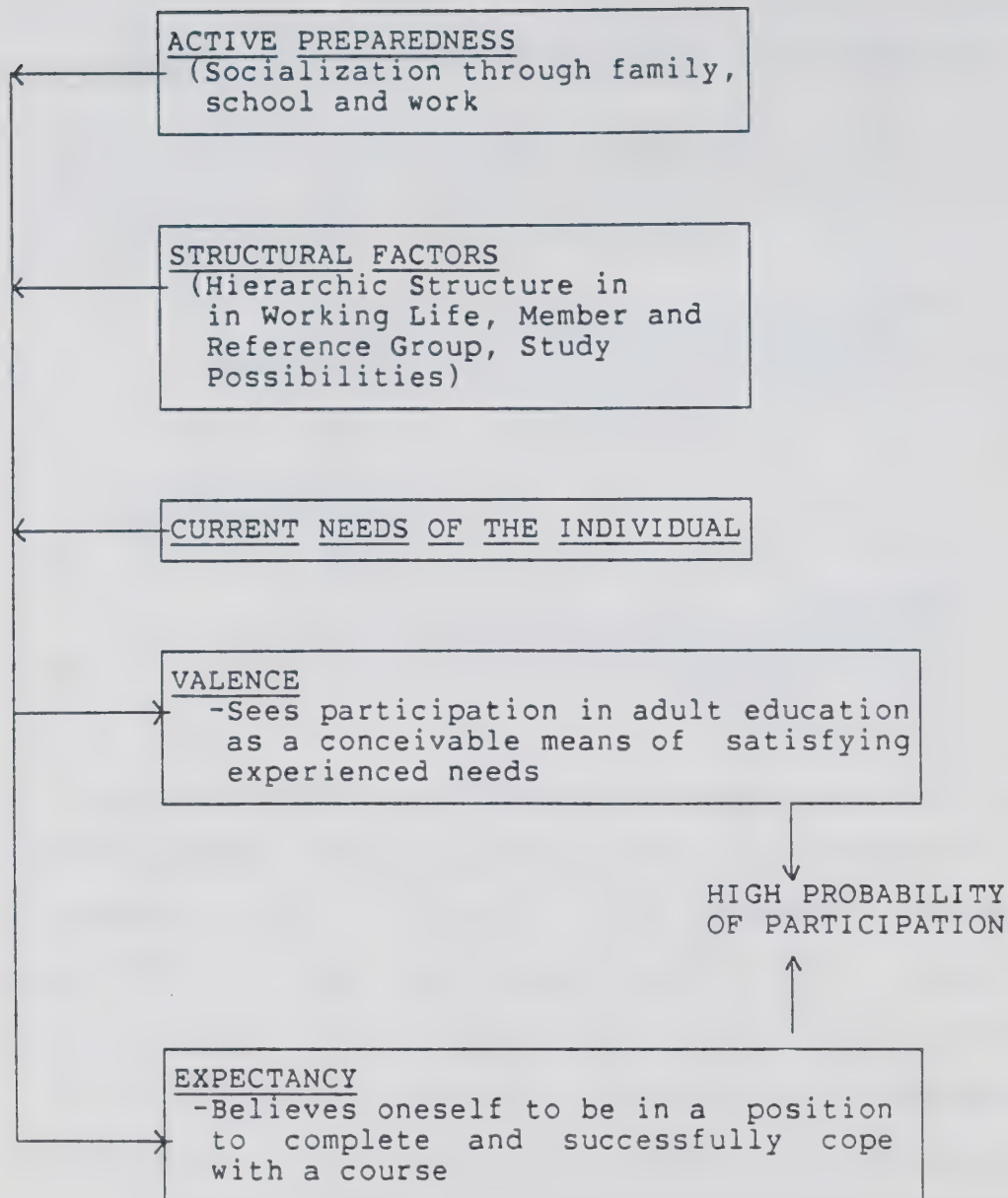


Figure 1: Model of Recruitment and Barriers

Like all models, that presented in Figure 1 is a simplified image of reality.

Through the socialization which has taken place within the family, the school and occupational life, individuals have

developed an attitude and approach to, among other things, different forms of adult education. This is expressed in the degree of active preparedness to adult education.

Concerning the structural factors, the focus of attention is on factors in the current environment which may conceivably stimulate or inhibit participation. I have argued elsewhere (Rubenson, 1977) that the degree of hierarchic structure in the work-life and values of the member and reference groups appear to be of central importance. Another influential factor is study possibilities, e.g. admissions policies, financial aid system, course offerings and information etc. Of course there are other factors which, to varying extents, influence the participation of different groups. Hierarchic structure, member and reference groups and study possibilities, however, appear to be of general significance and have therefore been accorded special status in the model.

The other main component comprises the current needs of the individual, which among other things reflect his material situation and the developmental tasks confronting the individual during his life cycle.

Using the model as a starting point, an attempt will be made to give a comprehensive explanation of barriers, especially dispositional barriers, and further point to some necessary prerequisites in order to change the present situation.

#### Active Preparedness

How are we to account for the fact that educational level

consistently shows the highest correlation with participation in adult education? To some extent of course, it reflects the fact that the highly-educated are often in occupational positions which offer opportunities for participation in different forms of education. The literature shows, however, that the differences are even larger where non-competence-giving adult education is concerned.

This can be explained by the socialization which has taken place within the family, the school system and, later on, in working life. This has resulted in adult education becoming a part of the value system of certain groups but not of other groups. Participation in non-competence-giving adult education thus has been shown to be a part of a leisure style consisting of types of cultural activities usually found in the middle and upper classes. (Bergsten, 1977, p. 136).

In public debate the school is often pointed out as the major villain. However, it is not very fruitful to concentrate on the degree of comfort and well-being experienced by students in order to explain the school's influence on subsequent participation in adult education. Interest ought instead to be directed to the role pre-adult education is awarded in society. It is puzzling that adult educators can so fully embrace the principle of lifelong education and yet still treat adult education as a system in splendid isolation.

There are three things a person requires before he is able to perform satisfactorily in a role (Brim, 1966). He must know



what is expected of him (both with regard to behaviour and values); he must be able to meet the role requirements; and he must desire to practice the behaviour and pursue the appropriate ends.

The object of youth education is to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states demanded of him not solely by the political society as a whole but also by the particular milieu for which he is specifically destined (Durkheim, 1956:71). Thus, despite some rhetoric to the contrary, children do not leave the educational system with the same basic values.

This is important to understand as the major changes from childhood to adult socialization are the shifts in emphasis from motivation to ability and knowledge, and from concern with values to a concern with behaviour. Society assumes that the adult knows the values to be pursued in different roles, that he wants to pursue them with the socially appropriate means, and that all that remains to be done is to teach him what to do. That this interpretation of adult socialization governs the perceived functions of adult education is reflected in the following quotation from Verner (1964:88):

For purposes of adult education, at least we can say, therefore, that an adult is a person who has come into that state of life in which he assumed responsibility for himself and usually for others, and who has concomitantly accepted a functionally productive role

in his community.

In order to account fully for the cumulative effects of the pre-adult education system, we also have to look at the way the educational system helps to define which people are allocated to different social settings and how these settings influence participation in adult education (see the discussion of structural factors below).

Due to selective socialization and the allocation function of education, adults will come to differ with regard to how they value education, how they are motivated to pursue education and their ability to participate in education. An "adult education" that implicitly takes for granted that the adult is a conscious, self-directed individual in possession of the instruments vital to making use of the available possibilities for adult education and that relies on self-selection to recruit the participants, will help to widen, not narrow, the educational and cultural gaps in society.

#### Structural Factors

Structural factors tend to strengthen previously established inequalities. It is those with a high degree of active preparedness who are in environments which give them scope for influencing their situation (i.e. a low degree of hierarchic structure). Their member and reference groups are often positive to adult education, and moreover they have, relatively, the best access to education.

If for a moment we regard differences in active preparedness as constant (of course they also change in a changing surrounding world) the question becomes what changes can be achieved concerning structural factors and what significance these ultimately have in counteracting over time the accumulated inequalities which have been established? I shall touch upon three areas--member and reference groups, working life and study possibilities.

#### Member and Reference Groups

On this point I will refer to Newcomb (1950, p. 225f), who introduced the concepts of member and reference groups. According to Newcomb, the former type is a group of which the person is an acknowledged member, e.g. the family, or political or religious groups. The individual shares the norms of the group not only because he is acknowledged but also because he has learned to satisfy his needs on the basis of commonly accepted norms. Often, however, one learns to utilize norms from other groups of which one is not an acknowledged member. This is why Newcomb believes it is fruitful to distinguish between member groups and reference groups. We may assume that all member groups serve as reference groups, one way or another, while on the other hand not all reference groups serve as member groups. Brunner (1959) touches on the relation between participation in adult education and the norms of member groups. He refers to a study by Houle (1947) which showed that education programmes based on the interests of individuals reached smaller



numbers of people than those which were based on the pattern of values in the group. Thus it was found that the course preferences of the persons consulted were determined more by the values of the group than by individual interests.

Newcomb's approach is fruitful not only when one wishes to explain differences of dispositional barriers between less well-educated and well-educated persons, or the behaviour of minority groups, but also when trying to understand the differences existing within the under-educated group. Several studies have shown that white collar workers, regardless of occupational level, participate in adult education more than manual workers. Rubenson (1975, p. 224f) found no differences between the two groups with regard to situational impediments, but there were differences in their attitudes to education. One possible explanation is that the former are influenced more than the latter by other people besides their co-workers, the latter being regarded for present purposes as a member group. In many cases it may conceivably be that white collar workers form a reference group with a positive attitude toward adult education. To this is added the fact that the working group, regarded as a member group, has by tradition constituted a stronger pressure group among manual workers than among white collar workers. This is discussed, for example, by Miller (1967), who observes the conflicts existing in the U.S. between the values of the working class and the values represented by educational institutions. According to Miller, this conflict is manifested

by the indifference of American trade unions to questions concerning adult education.

It is clear from the experience and the theoretical approaches mentioned above that it is not enough to try to inform and influence individual persons; one also has to work through the groups to which the individual belongs and identifies himself with. This has been made apparent by the experimental outreach work conducted in Sweden.

Few, if any, Swedish adult educational experiments have aroused as much attention internationally as the experimental programme FOVUX, which pursued outreaching activities. Trying to interest people in adult education through personal contact is, of course, not new. The new feature which arrived with FOVUX was to give the outreaching activity a more established form and organization to act as a recruitment model based on earmarked state funds (SOU 1974:54). The experiments were conducted both at the workplace and in housing areas. Judging from the number of those recruited it is obvious that the greatest successes have been achieved at workplaces. More than 40 percent of the blue collar workers contacted came to participate in a course. The recruitment figure in the housing areas was about 25 percent.

A fundamental difference is that the contact within housing areas is directed at individuals while contact at the workplace is collective. The success of FOVUX depends partly on the fact that the outreaching activity included the overwhelming majority

of the work group thus affecting not only the individual but also one of his most significant member-groups.

### Study Possibilities

In the theoretical considerations underlying the sketch in Figure 1 participation is very much dependent on whether the individual sees any value in education, i.e. whether he expects through education to meet the demands made by him, thereby influencing his own situation.

In order to understand why the equity effects of adult education are so small we have to look at the way in which individuals' demands determine what the adult educational organizations supply. The activities of these organizations have been a response to manifest demands rather than to the needs stemming from inequalities in society.

Results from welfare surveys and research on participation in adult education bluntly reveal that demands are negatively related to objective needs of education (i.e., being underprivileged). Put very simplistically, there is a vicious circle: poor childhood conditions, short formal education, low educational standard in adult life, reduced opportunities for participating in political life, no influence through participation, no improvement of the educational standard, etc. The implication of this claim with regard to demand for adult education is that the objective conditions will cause difficulties in looking after one's own rights, obtaining information, etc.



There are two main reasons why demands determine the supply, even when there is an underlying intention to reach a more equitable situation--the conflict between goals, and the system of financing.

The problem is that the equity goal is never the sole goal of adult education. In some instances, it doesn't even exist. However, even when it is present it coexists with the economic and "service" (the satisfaction of individual preferences) goals. There is a fundamental opposition between these goals when they are combined to the same degree or within the same organizations.

The equity "profits" raise very high service-policy "costs" if a measure is determined for both goals. A policy for equity means a striving for equalization, which, in turn, implies a wish or a conception that certain groups shall "consume" a supply. The policy is determined by, in one way or another, objectively determined needs. Service-policy means that the demands must be satisfied, and such a policy is, at the same time, determined by these needs.

This raises two problems that are very seldom solved. The first is to stimulate the demands among the groups for which a measure is taken. The second is to under-stimulate the demands from groups that are not direct objects for a measure.

The subsidies to the adult educational organizations are of a general character. Often the support is based on the number of participants and/or lessons. The subsidies are not, in other

words, aimed at improving the recruitment of the underprivileged or at producing a specific result. Even worse, many of the organizations must to a large extent rely on student fees. In the local competitive situation, the organizations with a service oriented activity will have a "market-leading" position. The reason for this is that the financing formula gives the service-policy oriented organization certain advantages. Thus an organization that wants to reach equity effects is forced by the market to partly adopt a service policy orientation. If they started to act solely with an equity purpose, they would soon lose a great deal of the foundation for their activities. This loss would mean that, in the future, it would be impossible to provide even the few equity activities they have today. To bring about a change it is necessary that the future subsidies to adult education are earmarked for equity purposes to a much larger extent than has previously been the case. This, however, requires one to express more exactly the group whose living condition should be equalized and deeper knowledge of the study methods and the content which can create equity effects, i.e., redistribution of social, political, cultural and economic resources.

One strategy to change the existing link between supply and demand is to finance adult education taking place in various voluntary organizations. This would give different interest groups the power to control the content and method and allow their educational programmes to reflect their ideology. On this

point it is of interest to look at the experiences from paid educational leave in the Federal Republic of Germany. One of the reasons why paid educational leave has not lived up to its potential or to the hopes of its proponents stems from the gap between educational and training offerings and the needs and expectations of adults, particularly adults with little or no more than compulsory schooling (Schuetze, 1983). The German federal government has therefore decided to sponsor some extensive model programmes where the needs, interests and motivation of special target groups (e.g. young people, migrant workers, women, unskilled or semi-skilled industrial workers) have been studied and evaluated in order to assess the kinds of outreach, counselling and course content which can best reach these groups.

### Working Life

The allocation of roles in society influences participation in two ways. Firstly, certain roles provide more opportunities to take part in adult education than do others. This is most obvious if we look at occupational positions. Not only do those in higher positions get more opportunities through their work to take part in institutionalized forms of education, but they also have by far the best chances to learn new things on the job itself (see Table 3).



Table 3

Possibilities to Learn New Things On the Job  
by Socio-economic Group, Employment Volume  
and Formal Education

Percent Not Learning New Things (After, S.C.B., 1981:51)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP EMPLOYMENT VOLUME FORMAL EDUCATION	PERCENT NOT LEARNING NEW THINGS	N
<u>Workers</u>		
Unskilled Workers	74	568
Semi-skilled Workers	61	799
Skilled Workers	41	654
All Workers	58	2021
<u>Salaried Employees</u>		
Junior salaried employees	40	648
Intermediate-level Salaried Employees	24	567
Senior Salaried Employees	17	362
All salaried Employees	29	1578
Farmers	55	131
Entrepreneurs	29	286
<u>Employment Volume</u>		
Full-time Employees	40	1721
Part-time Employees	60	877
<u>Educational Level</u>		
Extremely Short Formal Education	63	160
Pre-secondary	59	1665
Secondary	40	1650
Post-secondary	24	696

Table 3 reflects the polarization that occurs in working life. The differences existing among various groups entering the labour market become more and more pronounced throughout the life span. Those who are favoured find themselves in a work

situation which is constantly generalizing a need for knowledge, while the complete opposite applies to those who suffer dequalification. While it is true that a growing number of the labour force is engaged in tasks requiring higher qualifications and a greater degree of specialization, mechanization and automation have substantially reduced the qualifications required of large groups. One of the most urgent and difficult issues is to develop an educational strategy for avoiding a permanent under-class of unskilled and low-paid workers. As has been argued by Levin and Schuetze (1983), high technology jobs will be expanding at a faster rate than many of the more traditional ones, but they will represent only a very small portion of the total number of new jobs that will be created in the next two decades. For example, although the number of positions for such jobs as computer operators is expected to double in the U.S. in the 1980-1990 period, this will result in the net creation of only about 160,000 new jobs in that area (Carey, 1982; ref. in Levin & Schuetze, 1983). However, during the same period, the number of new jobs for janitors and sextons is expected to approach almost 700,000 and there will be 492,000 new jobs for food preparation and service workers in fast food restaurants (Carey, ref. in Levin & Schuetze, 1983).

The other way that the allocation of roles has an impact is more indirect and has to do with how the objective world influences the perception of reality. Thus, mental structures are inevitably formed differently in different societal and

historical settings (Mannheim, 1936:238). This is reflected, for example, in the established relationship between job design and the individual's life outside of work. Meissner (1971) was able to demonstrate a direct connection between the shaping of work tasks and the life of the individual outside working hours. When the scope for individual initiative at work was limited by factors in the work process, the ability of workers to participate during their leisure in activities posing demands of this kind appeared to diminish. A similar tendency emerges regarding the effect of work affording limited opportunities for social contact. When workers are allowed more control over their work, they show more interest in participating in decision-making processes. Accompanying changes also occur in their leisure activities and lead to a more active leisure (Bergsten, 1977).

Of particular interest is the line taken by the trade unions. Thoroughgoing changes in the educational situation of the employees will probably require, among other things, greater involvement of trade union organizations in matters connected with adult education. One step in this direction is for the trade unions to endeavour, by means of legislation or collective bargaining, to gain added control over education. The reason for underlining the importance of the trade unions so heavily is that they should be capable of playing an important part in bringing about a scheme of adult education that is conducive to systematic change and which provides the collective with a means



of obtaining better conditions. The great majority of adults in ordinary occupations and with ordinary social conditions cannot improve their situation by means of individual careers, by "doing something else". Nor can they rest content with improvements within the framework of existing conditions. Instead the main opportunities of a better life are to be found in the transformation of work by collective efforts. In the ultimate analysis, the crucial question will be whether work is organized in such a way as to facilitate a more even distribution of knowledge within the work force.

The issue of industrial democracy and reforms of working life is crucial to the Canadian debate on human resources. The relationship between human skills and industrial restructuring depends not only upon the extent of provision of education and training, but also on the effectiveness with which the actual stock of knowledge is used in practice. The reason for Japan's economic success is to a large extent due to utilization of existing human resources.

In summary, a person's decision to participate or not will, to a large extent, depend on earlier socialization, the hierarchical structure of work, values of member and reference groups and the way that the demand governs the supply of adult education.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this paper has been to examine barriers to

participation in adult education.

The conclusion is that close attention has to be paid to the link between educational and labour market developments and barriers to engagement in adult education.

At present, the focus is on how to provide the future supply of human resources in Canada. There is an apparent danger that this will be done by relying on specific measures unrelated to educational policy in general. Further, the strategy may be based solely on labour market and economic efficiency considerations and neglect the equity aspect.

In order to avoid this scenario there is a need for a closer coordination of educational policy and other social sectors, especially labour policy and social policy. What is called for is a coherent approach not to one issue, skill development, but the complex of interrelated problems that Canadian society is facing--skill shortage, high unemployment, polarization of the labour market, and insufficient worker and social participation.

In this perspective one should consider a rapprochement of the two different forces promoting adult education, lifelong education embedded in humanistic philosophy and the human capital thinking that is behind the skill development "movement".

If lifelong education is going to become anything but airy ideas there must be a direct programme of action. One possible way for this to happen could be through some kind of paid

educational leave system which would promote the distribution of education over the total life span of the individual in a recurring way.

A rapprochement is of interest not only as a way to implement lifelong education, but also from the strict economic efficiency concern that surrounds the discussions on skill development. As was pointed out earlier the problem is not only one of development of human resources but also of the utilization of existing skills. This calls for increased worker participation and the democratization of the workplace, ideas that are central in the philosophy of lifelong education.

Whether the educational and cultural gaps will increase or decrease in the future will to a large extent depend on the developments in working life and public policies on the distribution of resources for adult education. It is in this broad context that barriers to adult education should be understood.





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